



Pakistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 24 April 2012

Treatment of non-Muslims in Pakistan

The *Associated Press* in March 2012 points out that:

“Over recent years, violence against the minorities has increased, as Islamic hard-liners' influence over the country has strengthened.” (Associated Press (27 March 2012) *Forced conversions hike Pakistan minorities' fears*)

A report published in March 2012 by the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* states:

“The government of Pakistan continues to both engage in and tolerate systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. Pakistan's repressive blasphemy laws and other religiously discriminatory legislation, such as the anti-Ahmadi laws, have created an atmosphere of violent extremism and vigilantism. Sectarian and religiously-motivated violence is chronic, and the government has failed to protect members of the majority faith and religious minorities. Pakistani authorities have not consistently brought perpetrators to justice or taken action against societal leaders who incite violence. Growing religious extremism threatens the freedoms of religion and expression, as well as other human rights, for everyone in Pakistan, particularly women, members of religious minorities, and those in the majority Muslim community who hold views deemed "un-Islamic" by extremists.” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (20 March 2012) *USCIRF Annual Report 2012 - Countries of Particular Concern: Pakistan*)

This report also states:

“The situation in Pakistan remains exceedingly poor for religious freedom. Discriminatory laws promulgated in previous decades and persistently enforced have fostered an atmosphere of religious intolerance and eroded the social and legal status of members of religious minorities, including Shi'a Muslims, Christians, Ahmadis, Hindus, and Sikhs. Government officials do not provide adequate protections from societal violence to members of religious minority communities, and perpetrators of attacks on minorities rarely are brought to justice.” (ibid)

In March 2012 *Amnesty International* notes:

“The Pakistan Government has failed to protect religious minorities from systematic campaigns of violence and vilification...” (Amnesty International (1 March 2012) *Pakistan authorities must do more to protect religious minorities*)

In March 2012 a report issued by the *United Nations News Service* points out that:

“A group of independent United Nations human rights experts today urged the Government of Pakistan to take decisive measures to end sectarian violence and

protect religious minorities after a second incident of targeted killings in two weeks.” (United Nations News Service (2 March 2012) *UN rights experts urge Pakistan to end sectarian violence, protect minorities*)

The *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* in February 2012, note in a report that:

“There is clear evidence that violence and intolerance towards religious minorities have increased in Pakistan in recent years in direct proportion to the growing militancy and religious extremism in the country. The government's inability to protect the rights of members of religious minority and vulnerable communities in the face of this advance by militants and extremists has contributed to the acute sense of vulnerability these communities feel.” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (6 February 2012) *Perils of faith: Report of HRCP Working Group on Communities Vulnerable because of their Beliefs*)

In February 2012 the *Asian Human Rights Commission* notes:

“Police is often failing to protect the members of religious minorities including Ahmadias, Shias, Christians and Hindus. Militant groups are carrying out suicide bombings and targeted killings across the country. The Taliban and affiliated groups are increasingly targeting civilians and public spaces, including marketplaces, hospitals, and religious processions.” (Asian Human Rights Commission (8 February 2012) *Pakistan: Brutal sectarian violence against Shias continues unabated*)

A paper published in February 2012 by the *International Association for Religious Freedom* points out that:

“The rights of religious minorities have been violated in a number of ways, such as attacks on their religious sites and homes, and kidnapping.” (International Association for Religious Freedom (28 February 2012) *Written statement* submitted by the International Association for Religious Freedom, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status*, p.4)

A report released in March 2012 reviewing events of 2011 by the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* states:

“2011 was a difficult year not only for religious minorities in Pakistan but also for those advocating their rights and protection.” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (20 March 2012) *State of Human Rights in 2011 - Chapter III: Fundamental freedoms*)

This report also points out that:

“There were clear indications that faith-based violence and violations of rights were on the rise in Pakistan both in terms of geographical area and scale.” (ibid)

It is also noted in this document that:

“Raising one's voice for the rights of non-Muslims had become more dangerous than ever.” (ibid)

A report issued in January 2012 by *Human Rights Watch* commenting on events of the previous year notes:

“Religious minorities faced unprecedented insecurity and persecution.” (Human Rights Watch (22 January 2012) *World Report 2012, Pakistan*, p.1)

This document also states:

“Across Pakistan attacks took place against Shia and other vulnerable groups. Sunni militant groups, such as the supposedly banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi, operated with impunity even in areas where state authority is well established, such as the Punjab province and Karachi.” (ibid, p.2)

In September 2011 a report covering events between July & December 2010 published by the *United States Department of State* points out that:

“The constitution and other laws and policies restricted religious freedom and, in practice, the government enforced these restrictions.” (United States Department of State (13 September 2011) *July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report - Pakistan*)

This report also states:

“The government rarely investigated or prosecuted the perpetrators of increased extremist attacks on minorities and the majority promoting tolerance, which deepened the climate of impunity. Despite the government's steps to protect religious minorities, societal intolerance and violence against minorities and Muslims promoting tolerance increased, and abuses under the blasphemy laws continued.” (ibid)

It is also noted in this report that:

“Discriminatory legislation, such as the blasphemy laws and the anti-Ahmadi provisions of law, and the government's failure or delay in addressing religious hostility by societal actors fostered religious intolerance, acts of violence, and intimidation against religious minorities and Muslims alike.” (ibid)

This document also points out:

“Reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice continued, and there were increased reports of human rights and religious freedom activists and members of minorities going into hiding due to a climate of intolerance and fear, especially after the arrest of Aasia Bibi and the controversy surrounding the blasphemy laws. Relations between religious communities remained tense. Societal discrimination against religious minorities was widespread, and societal violence against such groups occurred. Nongovernmental actors, including violent extremist groups and individuals, targeted religious congregations. Acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities by extremists increased and exacerbated existing sectarian tensions. Extremists in some parts of the country demanded that all citizens follow a strict version of Islam and threatened brutal consequences if they did not abide by it.” (Ibid)

This report also states:

“Government policies did not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups.” (ibid)

It is also pointed out in this publication that:

“Sectarian violence continued in different parts of the country during the reporting period, with attacks on the Shia minority, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, Quetta, Hangu, Kohat, Tank, DG Khan, Gilgit, and Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. Throughout the reporting period, attacks, threats, and violence by religious extremists occurred across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.” (ibid)

This document also states:

“During the reporting period there were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.” (ibid)

A report issued in June 2011 by the *Jinnah Institute* notes:

“The events of 2010-2011 have not occurred in a vacuum and are not atypical of Pakistani reality. These most recent attacks on religious minorities and the state’s tolerance towards this persecution are part of a longer-term pattern of state complicity at all levels – judicial, executive and legislative – in the persecution of and discrimination against minorities.” (Jinnah Institute (7 June 2011) *A Question of Faith, A Report on the Status of Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, p.5)

This report also states that:

“...the legislature, executive and judiciary have historically played a foundational role in creating two-tiers of Pakistani citizenship, which are defined by whether a person is a Muslim or a non-Muslim.” (ibid, p.5)

It is also noted in this document that:

“...the heightened threat of extremism and the ascendancy of armed extremist militant groups confronting the Pakistani state have created a situation of “double jeopardy” for Pakistan’s religious minorities who now face the multiple assaults of vigilante attacks, increased physical threats and social persecution from extremist groups, as well as the discriminatory legal frameworks of the state and failure of the state to punish hate crimes. Indeed, the situation for Pakistani minorities has never been more dire than it is today.” (ibid, p.5)

An *International Crisis Group* report issued in December 2011 on politics in Pakistan, states:

“...so long as the Islamic parties are able to pressure governments, through parliamentary and/or often violent street politics, they will continue to obstruct vital democratic reforms, thus reinforcing an environment in which religious intolerance, vigilantism, and militancy thrive, the rule of law continues to deteriorate, and elected governments are unable to stabilise.” (International Crisis Group (12 December 2011) *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, p.2)

This report also points out that:

“Sectarian politics are, in fact, becoming increasingly violent, as more Islamic parties and groups espouse militancy as the most effective method to promote their interests. Indeed, the majority of Islamic parties are far from abandoning the concept of militant jihad or cutting their ties to local and regional militants, including sectarian extremists, the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked jihadi outfits.” (ibid, p.34)

The *South Asia Terrorism Portal* in April 2012 states:

“Pakistan is being wrecked by the enduring catastrophe of jihadi and sectarian extremism, certainly under the benign neglect or tolerance, and in many cases, the active encouragement, collusion and support, of state agencies.” (South Asia Terrorism Portal (23 April 2012) *Sectarianism: Savage Campaign*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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